

# RED MISTS

• SWORDS AGAINST SORCERY •



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A TABLETOP RPG BY BILL EDMUNDS

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• SWORDS AGAINST SORCERY •



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# RED MISTS

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Red Mists is a roleplaying game where the players portray characters in search of treasure, glory, and adventure. They both fear and hate sorcery in all manifestations; the unnatural beasts of dark places, the evil priests bent on transforming the world, the crazed magicians who believes they can summon demons and bend them to their will.

There is seldom a greater good being fought for, as the very concept of goodness is alien in a world so savage and unfair. Survival is the daily goal of everyone.

Adventurers just like that daily goal to be fraught with possibility.

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## CORE MECHANICS

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When an adventurer attempts to do something uncertain and dramatic, he makes a *test*. Tests can be anything from swimming across a raging river, locating a secret door, attacking a monster, to leaping across a chasm.

Tests have an obstacle based on active resistance, usually an NPC's attribute, or a GM-assessed resistance. Bargaining with a merchant for a cheaper price, listening for the approach of a cutpurse, and stabbing at an enemy are all examples of tests based on an NPC's resisting attribute. The merchant might resist with his attribute ratings for defiance or guile, while an enemy combatant could resist an adventurer's attack with reflexes or thews. Attribute ratings generally range from 2 to 5, but may reach higher levels.

The GM needs to assess resistance for tests against obstacles that are not offering any active opposition. The chasm isn't trying to stop the

barbarian from jumping across it, just as the river isn't resisting the amazon trying to swim against it. Most resistance numbers for these things will range from 0 to 5.

Before any dice are rolled, the GM and player should establish the general stakes for both success and failure. The difference between critical, standard, and marginal results may be agreed upon, or matters may be established for standard results only; more severe outcomes can be left to expanding the agreed upon standard results. In all cases, let the intent and the context be your guide.

The possible outcomes of a test are:

- 6: critical success, aka *Yes, and*
- 5: standard success, aka *Yes*
- 4: marginal success, aka *Yes, but*
- 3: marginal failure, aka *No, but*
- 2: standard failure, aka *No*
- 1: critical failure, aka *No, and*

The “but” and “and” results are known as *qualifiers*. Qualifiers give you unintended *drawbacks* or *benefits* beyond simple success and failure. See page 29 for more information on qualifiers.

To conduct a test, the player begins with a single die. This is called the base die.

Now find the difference between the adventurer's appropriate attribute (guile, defiance, instinct, reflexes, or thews) and the resistance as set forth by the GM. For example, if the adventurer's attribute is rated at 4 and the resistance is 3, the difference is 1 die. Add the difference, in dice, to the base die. These dice form what is known as the dice pool.

If the difference favors the adventurer, the result of rolling the dice pool is the *highest* die. If the difference favors the resisting NPC or obstacle, the result is the *lowest* die. If the difference is zero, the result is whatever the base die yields.

One key thing to understand: in Red Mists, *the GM never rolls the dice. Everything is rolled from the perspective of the character. If an NPC is trying to do something to a character, the PC rolls to prevent the NPC from succeeding.*

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*Paul is playing a character named Pelagius, an adventurer attempting to track a brigand through the woods. Paul begins with one die (the base die). The GM says the tracking attempt will be a test based on Pelagius' instinct (ranked at 3). The GM declares a resistance of 2, meaning Paul must subtract two dice from his instinct of 3, leaving one die to add to his base die. Paul rolls two dice, getting a 6 (yes, and) and a 3 (no, but). The best result is the 6, meaning Pelagius has achieved the best possible outcome, a critical success! The GM rules that he not only tracks his enemy but also manages to conceal his presence.*

*Having tracked his foe and managing to arrive hidden behind a tree, Pelagius decides he wants to spring out and grapple the enemy to the ground.*

*The GM believes this constitutes two goals: surprising the enemy and grappling with him. Surprising the brigand will be based on reflexes and grappling will be based on thews. Pitted against Pelagius will be the brigand's instinct and thews.*

*After some discussion, Paul and his GM agree that, for the surprise attempt, failure will result in the brigand noticing the attack before it lands. Success will allow Pelagius to get the jump on his enemy. If he does, he may proceed to the grapple with success resulting in Pelagius dragging his foe to the ground with a 5, or knocking him to the ground with a 6. They don't specify other results, feeling they have enough of a framework to proceed.*

*For the surprise test, Pelagius' reflexes of 4 is pitted against the brigand's instinct of 2. That is 4 dice versus a resistance of 2. Pelagius rolls three dice, landing a 3, 2 and 1. The best result is a 3 (no, but), meaning the brigand detects his approach, but there is a silver lining. Paul suggests the brigand hears Pelagius and turns to face him before the grapple occurs, but that Pelagius is in good position for the conflict, gaining an extra die for the first round of what is certainly looking like a good fight. The GM agrees. It's on to the struggle!*

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Throughout this book you will see examples provided for various contest results. The combat chapter, for example, illustrates some standard results for successful attack actions. It cannot be overstated that *these are examples only*. When you announce your intention for any contest, you can dictate the desired result ahead of time. The GM may increase or decrease the resistance based on your plan. If you want to disarm your opponent, simply announce your intent. You get your intended goal with a result of 5, a better-than-expected result on 6, and so on. As long as you and the GM agree on the possible outcomes in advance, you can try anything you want to. Here is an example of how you can read a result in different ways.

“I will disarm the guard.”

	benefit	drawback
	<i>guard takes an extra 2 points of damage</i>	<i>you hurt yourself; take 1 damage</i>
<i>Success (the guard is disarmed)</i>	<i>guard stumbles; +1d to your next action</i>	<i>you stumble; -1d to your next action</i>
	<i>you take the guard's weapon</i>	<i>you drop your own weapon</i>
	<i>you gain +1d to your next attempt at disarming the guard</i>	<i>your grip on your weapon weakens; reduce your next action by 1d</i>
<i>Failure (the guard keeps his weapon)</i>	<i>guard's grip on his weapon weakens; reduce his resistance by 1d</i>	<i>guard hits you for 1 damage</i>
	<i>you disengage</i>	<i>you drop your own weapon</i>

You may notice the penalties and bonuses in the example are both a single die. A 1d modifier is usually easy to agree upon. That said, it is nothing more than an example; if you and the GM agree your attempt warrants 2d or more, go for it. Just make sure you both know



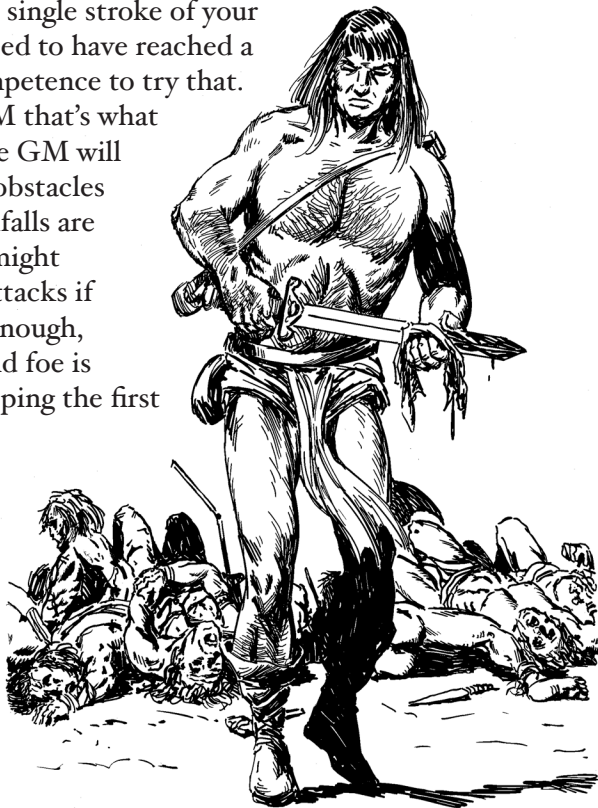
the stakes before any results are applied.

This philosophy means there are no pre-defined ‘feats’ in Red Mists. While such things can be exciting and rewarding to play with, they also suggest limitations. In other words, if there is a special ability called Double Flip Decapitating Maneuver, it is easy to reach the conclusion that you can’t try that kind of move without the named ability.

In Red Mists you can try anything you want at any time.

When you want to shoot an arrow at an enemy across a field, you don’t calculate the distance and consult a chart to see if your bow can shoot that far. You ask the GM ‘do I think I can hit that guy?’ The GM then gives you an answer.

When you want to run across a room and attack two enemies with a single stroke of your sword, you don’t need to have reached a certain level of competence to try that. You just tell the GM that’s what you want to do. The GM will then tell you what obstacles and potential downfalls are involved (the foes might be ready for your attacks if you don’t run fast enough, attacking the second foe is contingent on dropping the first foe, and so on).



# CHARACTER GENERATION

Characters in *Red Mists* are experienced freebooters, cutthroats, barbarians, and mercenaries. They have traveled the breadth of the land in search of wealth and adventure. They are driven by riches, bloodlust, restlessness, and vengeance. There is no ‘zero to hero’ progressions for your character; he’s no hero and he’s already seen and done things the rest of the world only hears about in tales and whispers. You don’t rely on magic, for that is the province of demons and the sick of mind. Steel in your hand is the only thing you need to make your way in a savage land.

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## STATS

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There are three sets of stats used in *Red Mists*: Themes, Attributes, and Impulses.

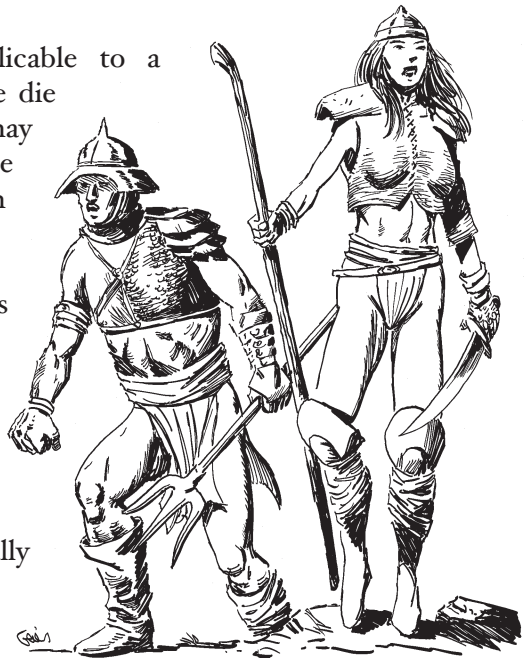
**Themes** are the meat of every character’s story. They are a record of the adventurer’s travels, exploits, quirks, and personality. Themes illustrate where you’ve been, what you’re famous for, what you’ve done, and how you act.

When a theme is applicable to a contest, you may add one die to your test pool. You may use as many applicable themes as you like, with GM approval.

Your adventurer begins play with four themes:

- one profession
- one attitude
- one environment
- one reputation

Your themes are usually expressed as a one to four words, such as ‘The Slums of Manifest’ or



‘Growls.’ There are an endless variety of possible theme variants, but here are some (non-exhaustive) examples.

Professions: soldier, barbarian, thief, priest, pirate, assassin, noble, hunter, prostitute, beggar, escaped slave

Attitudes: don’t touch me, I reject your civilized customs, pleasure before responsibility, wenches are not to be trusted

Environments: steaming jungles of Zhask, Xenthusan brothels, rough waters of the Moonstar Seas, the frozen Highreach tundras, arid plains of Corami

Reputations: slayer of the Brinthian drake, violent drunk, betrayer of the Sovereign Menachaetes, will kill anything for money

**Attributes** are a measure of your character’s tangible abilities. There are five Attributes: defiance, guile, instinct, reflexes, and thews.

- **Defiance** is a reflection of the character’s courage, willpower, and resistance to mind-affecting magic.
- **Guile** is a measure of cunning, charm, and problem-solving.
- **Instinct** is your acuity, intuition, and awareness.
- **Reflexes** is used for physical pursuits that require a degree of finesse and coordination such as jumping, sneaking, and brachiation.
- **Thews** represents physical strength, toughness, and might.

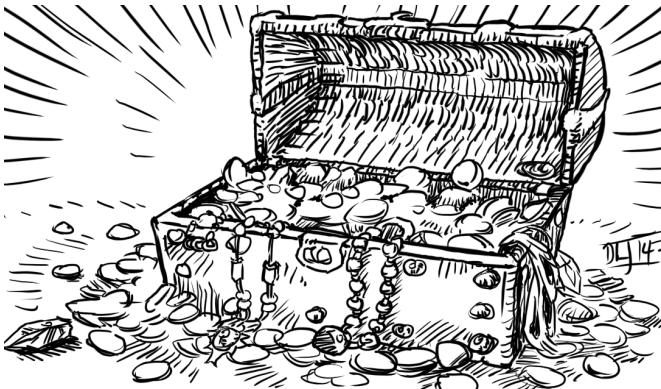
Each Attribute begins with a value of 2. Distribute 8 more points among them, with no Attribute ranking higher than 5.

**Impulses** represent your adventurer’s motivations on a visceral level. Some adventurers are driven by riches, others by lust or vengeance. There are five impulses. Your adventurer begins with 5 points spread among them. You must place points in at least two Impulses. You could, for example, have a rating of 3 in debauchery, 1 in self-preservation, and 1 in plunder.

You may use a point from a relevant impulse to re-roll a single unsatisfactory die. If the new result is worse than the original, you can

revert to the first roll. Each impulse also grants a unique ability.

- **Debauchery** is the pursuit of base pleasure, from imbibing endless quantities of alcohol to engaging in carnal excesses. You may spend a debauchery point to improve any test result by one (4 to 5, etc) when using alcohol or sexual wiles to gain information or influence an NPC.
- **Obsession** is a single-minded preoccupation that threatens to become all-consuming. Write down one obsession that your character cannot shake. Examples include vengeance against a specific person or group, the recovery of a lost heirloom, proving the existence of a mythical beast, and finding your kidnapped brother. When your character's quest is waylaid, threatened by defeat, or otherwise in jeopardy, you may spend an obsession point to re-roll an entire dice pool. You *must* keep the results of the second roll, even if they are worse than the first; obsession can be a dangerous thing.
- **Plunder** is the desire to take wealth and possessions. You may spend a plunder point to reduce the difficulty level of any test by one level when stealing wealth by picking pockets, using stealth, picking the lock of a treasure chest, and so on.
- **Self Preservation** is the impulse to survive no matter what the cost, even at the expense of others. You may use a self preservation point to add a die to a single skill pool when fleeing or fighting defensively.
- **Slaughter** is bloodlust, the urge to inflict violent harm on others. You may use slaughter points to add to any damage rolls. Damage is explained on page 21.



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*Pelagius is trying to creep into a sleeping prince's chambers to steal a valuable gem. He has a 'plunder' impulse of 3, meaning he can spend up to 3 points per session to aid in any test related to obtaining wealth. For this test, the GM asks for a reflexes (4) roll against a difficulty of 3. This means Pelagius rolls two dice, which results in a 2 (no) and 3 (no, but). This is hardly the outcome he wants, so his player spends a point of plunder to re-roll the die. This time he gets a 4 (yes, but). This is a great deal better, but the "but" means his success comes with a caveat; the GM tells him the gem will be stolen but the prince will wake up as he exits the room. He elects to spend a second plunder point and roll again. The die comes up a disastrous 1 (no, and). He could spend his final plunder point, but he doesn't want to do that. He stays with the 4 roll.*

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Impulse points are renewed by getting yourself into trouble. Each impulse has its drawbacks. How those drawbacks manifest is a matter of roleplaying your character. An adventurer with points in slaughter might be quick to attack anyone she doesn't trust. Someone with debauchery could end up passed out in an alley with no clothes and no money. *If the impulsive act doesn't cause you trouble, it doesn't replenish any points.* The plunder character who tries to pick the pockets of his ally only gets impulse points back if the attempt either fails or causes trouble relatively soon (perhaps the ally discovers the missing coins at a critical moment). Points are rewarded when the trouble occurs, and not a moment sooner. The standard rule is that you gain back one impulse point to the appropriate impulse when it gets you into trouble. The GM may reward more if she feels the act was particularly inspired.

Next to each impulse you have invested points in, make a note of how that impulse tends to get you into trouble. Make it broad enough to allow for flexibility and variation. If you later add points to impulses you don't currently have, you can develop their drawbacks during gameplay.

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*Pelagius' impulses are plunder 3 (tempted to steal from companions), self-preservation 2 (will give up anyone when in a tight spot, such as being questioned by authority), and debauchery 1 (can't pass up a gaming table).*

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## HIT POINTS AND LIFE LEVELS

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A character can suffer defeat nine times without fear of death, mental breakdown, or any other career-ending event. Each 'life level' is made up of 15 'hit points,' meaning that an adventurer who loses 15 or more hit points during a scene loses a life level. Hit points are an abstract measurement of the character's mental and physical toughness, narrative strength, and luck. Characters lose hit points through damage sustained in combat, physical mishaps, and extremes of mental duress. When a character loses a life level, he is defeated for that scene. The results of defeat depend on the fiction. Being defeated in combat could mean being knocked unconscious or getting subdued and captured by a foe. Against a sorcerer, it could indicate having your mind wracked with searing anguish (the 'fried your brain' cliché).

If damage reduces you below zero hit points, you are out of the contest and lose a life level. Any excess hit points lost from the attack do not affect your next life level.

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## STARTING GEAR

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Your character is fitted with the bare necessities for rigorous travel & adventure. You begin play with the following:

- A knife
- Signature clothing and footwear
- A wineskin filled with water or wine
- Rations for one week, including a cloak, belt, pouches, and sack
- A torch
- A unique item such as a sounding horn, a mysterious book, an ancient map, a vial of poison, or the finger bones of The Great Prophet Gurg.
- 100 coins. If your character has the plunder impulse, add 10x your plunder rating. If your character has the debauchery impulse, subtract 10x your debauchery rating.

On the following pages are items you can purchase with your coinage.

WEAPONS	Cost*	Notes
Light weapon	20	Knife, handaxe, sling, javelin, etc
Medium Weapon	30	Sword, mace, battleaxe, spear, bow, etc
Heavy Weapon	50	2-Handed weapons, polearms

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### ARMOR

Light armor	50	Mail shirt, leather breastplate, jerkin, etc
Heavy armor	100	Mail hauberk, breastplate & greaves, etc
Shield	25	Made of wood, hide, and iron

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### FOOD & SHELTER

Room at an inn	6	Reduce price by 50% for group room
Basic meal	2	Salted meat, soup, and bread
Extravagant meal	5	As above, but with fruit, wine, & cheese
Mug of ale	1	
Bottle of wine	2	Double price for good wine
Stabling for a horse	3	Reduce price by 50% for no roof
Rations for one week	5	Mostly salted meat and stale bread

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### SERVICES

Prostitute	2	Price is by the hour
Armor repair	5	Price is for light armor; x2 for heavy
Weapon repair	5	Metal weapon only
Sage or translator	5	Price is per hour
Cart driver	10	Price is per day
Guide	20	Price is per day
Cook	15	Price is per day; PCs must buy food
Unskilled laborer	5	Price is per day

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### LIGHT SOURCES

Torch or 5 candles	1	Torch includes burning pitch/tar
Lantern	2	
Lantern oil	1	Enough for 8 hours

ANIMALS	Cost	Notes
Riding horse	60	Includes saddle & bridle
War horse	100	Includes saddle & bridle
Ox or mule	30	Beasts of burden, includes travel sacks
Feed for animal	2	One week's worth for one animal
Boar	10	
Dog	10	Obeys basic commands, retrieves game

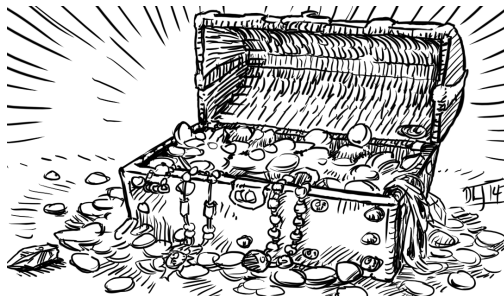
  

TRANSPORT		
Ferry	2	River crossing
Ship	20	Price per day, includes crew of five
Boat	5	Price per day, no crew
Cart	5	Price per day, no driver

ITEMS		
Pen & parchment	1	10 sheets
50' rope	2	
Small treasure chest	15	Can hold 1000 coins
Large treasure chest	25	Can hold 5000 coins
Thieves' tools	10	
Fine clothing	15	
Small instrument	15	Flute, tabor, timbrel, gittern
Large instrument	25	Lute, larger drum, lyre

\* Wealth in Red Mists is generically labelled as "coins." This can mean anything in your game world from gold to silver to bronze or anything in between.





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## ADVANCEMENT

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Characters in Red Mists begin play having already experienced many adventures. They've fought in wars, encountered nightmarish creatures, witnessed horrific acts of sorcery, and indulged in decadent behavior.

But they aren't finished.

Adventurers still have much to see, learn, and experience. These new exploits improve characters through advancement points (AP's). AP's may be spent to improve impulse ratings, add themes, and increase attributes. You gain an advancement point by accomplishing any of the following:

- Deplete and replenish all of your impulse points
- Gain 100 wealth and lose/spend/waste all of it in a colorful fashion
- Complete an adventure (the success or failure of the adventure is irrelevant)

You may spend your AP's on these aspects:

- Add a new theme. The theme must reflect the character's adventures as played out at the gaming table.
- Improve an attribute. The AP cost of doing so is equivalent to the cost of your current attribute score. In other words, if you want to improve your guile from 3 to 4, it would cost 3 AP.
- Add one point per AP to an existing impulse.
- Add one hit point
- Open a new impulse at 1 AP per rank. Thus, if you want to open 'slaughter' at rank 3, it would cost 3 AP.

# COMBAT

Combat takes center stage in most games of Red Mists. Like the sword & sorcery tales it draws inspiration from, combat is visceral and bloody. The most satisfying combat achievement for an adventurer is to DICE an opponent. DICE stands for *Dismember*, *Impale*, *Crush*, and *Eviscerate*. Bluntly, you're trying to hack your enemy to pieces.




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## COMBAT POOLS

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Like other tests, combat skill pools are based on an attribute. The attribute most commonly used depends on what you're fighting with. The standard breakdown goes something like this:

Light & medium weapons	Reflexes
Heavy weapons	Thews
Fisticuffs	Thews

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## WHAT CAN I DO EACH ROUND?

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You can do pretty much whatever you want. Actually, let me amend that: you can *try* pretty much anything you want. There is no turn allotment dictating how many action you can take. Tell the GM what you plan to accomplish. Whatever it is should be reasonable for a two or three second time frame. The GM will consider the idea and then decide how many actions are being proposed. Some actions, such as taking a few steps, probably won't require any rolls. Others, such as swinging your sword, certainly will. If any action requires a roll, the success of future actions on the turn may be dependent on it.

*Pelagius wants to leap over a crate, attack a man-ape with his greatsword, and dash off down a hallway. The GM agrees this could be accomplished in one turn, but sees this as two or three actions: a reflexes test for jumping over the crate, an attack with a heavy weapon (throws), and perhaps another reflexes test to avoid a reprisal from the man-ape. If jumping over the crate fails, the dagger attack will probably never happen, and neither will Pelagius' retreat into the hallway. The crate-leaping breakdown might go something like this:*

6 (yes, and) *the crate is jumped and the man-ape is denied any opposition roll against the dagger attack.*

5 (yes) *the crate is jumped and the dagger attack may commence.*

4 (yes, but) *the crate is jumped but the man-ape is ready. It responds with +1d to its dice pool against the dagger attack.*

3 (no, but) *Pelagius stumbles over the crate but may still attack, albeit at -1d to his attack pool.*

2 (no) *Pelagius stumbles over the crate and is not allowed to continue with his planned actions.*

1 (no, and) *Pelagius stumbles over the crate and the man-ape gains a free attack on him.*

A good rule of thumb is that any result of 4, 5, or 6 allows the adventurer to proceed to the next action, 3 *might* allow it, and 1 or 2 definitely stop things cold.

## Using Themes To Augment Your Combat Pool

Themes may be used to enlarge your combat pool if the theme indicates a distinct advantage over your opponent. For example, let's say you are fighting a soldier on a ship. You have the 'pirate' theme and the soldier isn't a seafaring fellow. You clearly have an advantage and may use your pirate theme, increasing the size of your dice pool by one. The GM will tell you if the theme is appropriate to the action you want to take.

Below are some examples where a theme might allow a bonus die.

Character Theme	Advantage Situations
Knight Errant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fighting from horseback against a mounted NPC who has no training with such combat</li> <li>Competing in a tourney against NPCs unused to the rules and etiquette of these events</li> </ul>
Back-alley Con man	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knife fighting in a crowded room against soldiers</li> <li>Escaping combat after a con goes wrong</li> </ul>
Barbarian of the Burning Wastes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fighting under the desert sun against a foe raised in a civilized northern climate</li> <li>Fighting with improvised weapons made from the bones of desert beasts against a non-native foe who does the same</li> </ul>
Amazon Queen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Battling a force of male slavers in the jungle</li> <li>Defending her people against invaders</li> </ul>

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## WHO GOES FIRST?

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Combat between antagonists in Red Mists does not require an 'initiative' roll. The player announces her intention and rolls her combat pool to see how her goal plays out. If that intent is to fight an enemy, a successful roll means she lands a blow, while an unsuccessful roll means she suffers damage; there is no need to determine whether the PC or enemy attack before the other (except for 'surprise,' below). To determine the order PCs act in relation to one another, each player rolls  $d6 + \text{reflexes}$ , with higher numbers acting before lower numbers.

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## SURPRISE

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While most combat attacks occur simultaneously, there are instances where one combatant is unprepared for the attack. If one fighter is able to conceal his presence (usually through a reflexes or instinct roll), he may take an action against a fixed difficulty of 1. The foe becomes aware of the aggressor's presence after that initial action *whether the action is successful or not*.

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## CLASH

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It's time to fight! Before you roll any dice, you need to determine the size of your dice pool. This is done as described earlier under opposed tests: start with a base die, then subtract the lesser skill dice from the higher skill dice.

If your dice pool is better than your opponent's attribute, your result is the highest die of the roll. If your opponent's skill is the better, the result is the lowest die.

Remember: *the player rolls all dice in a conflict*.

On a result of 4-6, you deal damage to your opponent equal to the dice roll (4, 5, or 6) plus your weapon's damage bonus (if any). Subtract the damage from the enemy's hit points.

*Pelagius attacks his foe with a sword (medium weapon, damage bonus +1). His attack succeeds with a 5, meaning the damage dealt is 6 points.*

You might also inflict a crippling injury. If the damage you dealt equals or exceeds the opponent's DICE score, you have DICE'd your foe. The location struck depends on the dice rolled (1=left leg, 2=right leg, 3=torso, 4=left arm, 5=right arm, 6=head). If your pool was higher than your opponent's, you select the hit location from any of the dice you rolled *other than the die used as the attack result*.

*Pelagius' attack was made with two dice. The results were 5 and 2. The 5 was used as the attack result, so he uses the 2 to determine the hit location (right leg).*

If the dice pool is even or favors the enemy, then the enemy determines the hit location. The same rule applies if the dice pool was made up of only one die.

*In a deadly combat against a giant, Pelagius is at a disadvantage; his skill pool is 4 dice while the giant's is 5. This means the pool favors the giant. If Pelagius manages to strike his enemy, the giant (i.e., the GM) determines where the blow lands for purposes of DICE.*

A DICE'd body part is functionally destroyed (severed, smashed, disemboweled, decapitated... you get the idea).

If you DICE a hit location that has already been destroyed, move the location laterally; left leg to right leg, left arm to torso, right leg to left leg, right arm to torso.

On a result of 1-3, your opponent damages you. Each NPC or monster has a damage stat listing how much damage it inflicts, generally between 5 and 10 points. For example, a giant snake has bite damage of 5/6/7, meaning it inflicts 7 damage on a roll of 1, 6 damage on a roll of 2, and 5 damage on a roll of 3. Subtract the damage from your hit points.

If the head is destroyed by a DICE strike, the victim is killed immediately. If an arm is destroyed, the victim's thews and reflexes are reduced by 1 and it cannot use that arm. If a leg is destroyed, the victim falls prone and its thews and reflexes are reduced by 1. Moreover, the only movement it may take is crawling. If the torso is DICE'd, the victim falls to the ground, reduces its thews and reflexes by 2, and cannot move from its current spot. If the torso is DICE'd by twice its normal value, the victim is killed.

## **Characters and Damage**

Adventurers do not suffer DICE. The damage inflicted upon them

is dealt to their standard hit point total only. While this may seem patently unfair, it fits the tradition of sword & sorcery characters. They may take beatings, suffer trauma, and even withstand torture (Conan was once crucified!), but they remain largely intact. Monsters and NPCs, on the other hand...

Adventurers reduced to zero hit points are defeated and fall unconscious, losing a life level in the process. Unconscious characters are frequently captured -- another sword & sorcery tradition!

Adventurers die when they are reduced to zero Hit Points *and* have no remaining life levels.

When an adventurer's hit points are reduced to 5 or less, he may use defiance in place of his standard combat attribute for any test rolls.

**Optional Rule:** if you would like to spice up combat a bit more, you can announce you are acting in a particularly aggressive and reckless manner. This increases the odds of rolling an extreme result, both good and bad. When taking a reckless action, any test result of 5 is changed to a 6, and any result of 2 is changed to a 1.

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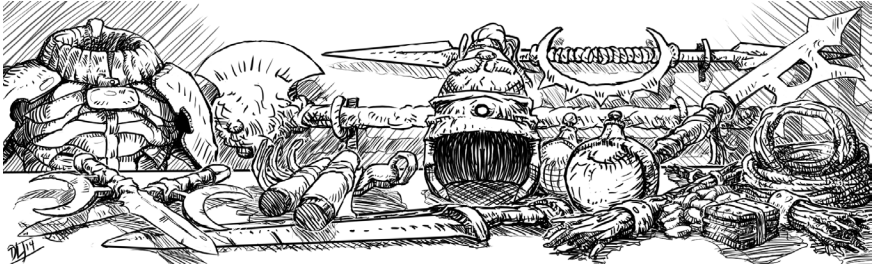
## ARMOR AND SHIELDS

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Wearing armor and bearing a shield can help your defensive efforts, although perhaps not as much as other games you're used to. Characters in sword & sorcery stories are often minimally clad, right down to a loincloth or chainmail bikini. Yet this lack of defensive garb seems to bear little effect on their survival rate! The same is true of your character. Nonetheless, there are benefits for wearing armor:

- Light armor (such as a mail shirt, breastplate, or a leather jerkin): reduce damage taken by 1 point
- Heavy armor (such as a mail hauberk or breastplate & greaves/vambraces): reduce damage taken by 2 points. Heavy armor assumes wearing a helm.
- Shield: reduce damage taken by 1 point

Armor and shields have drawbacks as well:



- Light armor: reduce reflexes by 1 point for jumping, climbing, and other movement requiring a test roll.
- Heavy armor: reduce all non-combat reflexes and instinct rolls by 1 point each.
- Shield: reduce reflexes by 1 point for any physical action other than melee combat. Attacker cannot wield a heavy melee weapon.

**Optional Rule:** characters wearing a lioncloth, chainmail bikini, or other flesh-revealing garb may add one die to all dice pools for physical actions such as combat, climbing, swimming, and jumping. Obviously, no armor protection is offered.

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## WEAPONS

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Any weapon is capable of killing an opponent. Conan dispatches many a foe with a knife, as does the Gray Mouser. Some types of weapon have their own benefits and drawbacks:

Weapon Type	Damage	Notes
Light (knife, sling, hand axe) or fisticuffs	+0	Allowed in most civilized places, easily concealable
Medium (sword, battle axe, spear, mace, small bow)	+1	Can be used with a shield (except for bows), allowed in some civilized places, hard to conceal
Heavy (two-handed weapons, polearms, longbow)	+2	Cannot be used with a shield, not allowed in most civilized places, impossible to conceal



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## RECOVERY

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Adventurers recover 15 hit points with at least four hours of sleep. They regain 5 hit points during a short rest. The length of the rest is unspecified; suffice it to say that it lies anywhere from 15 minutes to a couple of hours. Adventurers can never have more than 15 hit points at one time. Recovering hit points *never* replenishes a lost life level.

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## RABBLE

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Not every opponent is going to pose a significant threat to your adventurer. Called 'rabble,' these folk are nameless townspeople, minions of dark sorcerers, conscripted peasants, and pitchfork-waving zealots. Rabble tend to attack in groups. Their statistics are negligible and not worth detailing. You can kill many of them with a single stroke. When fighting a group of rabble, the standard combat rules are too involved. Use this system instead:

Roll your combat dice pool. For every 4, 5, or 6 rolled, you kill one rabble. For every round where there are still rabble remaining, you suffer one hit point of damage. Most rabble will flee when reduced to half their original number.



## COMBAT EXAMPLE

*Let's take a look at how a combat scene might play out. Our two heroes for this scene are Bronan the Barbarian (played by Bob) and The Brown Ratter (played by Richard). Any resemblance to fictional characters is entirely intended.*

### *Bronan, 15 hit points*

Defiance	Guile	Instinct	Reflexes	Thews
3	3	4	4	5
Debauchery	Obsession	Plunder	Self-Preserve	Slaughter
2	2	3	3	4

*Weapons & Armor: greatsword (heavy, +2 damage), light armor (1 pt)*

*Themes: barbarian, civilized are corrupt, angry bastard, northern wastes*

### *Brown Ratter, 15 hit points*

Defiance	Guile	Instinct	Reflexes	Thews
3	4	3	5	2
Debauchery	Obsession	Plunder	Self-Preserve	Slaughter
3	1	4	4	3

*Weapons & Armor: rapier (light), throwing knives (light), no armor*

*Themes: thief, all in good fun, never saw a bauble I didn't want, city slums*

*Our heroes encounter an man-ape that has taken a nobleman's daughter prisoner. The man-ape stands atop a cliff, while the nobleman's daughter lies chained inside a cave behind the great primate.*

### *Man-Ape*

Defiance	Guile	Instinct	Reflexes	Thews
5	2	5	4	6
DICE	Hit Points	Damage	Weapons	Armor
6	25	6/7/8	fists, bite	Hairy hide
Sample Qualifiers				
drawback		benefit		
throw enemy		flee if greatly outnumbered		
crushing hug		distracted by rage		

*(continued next page)*

## COMBAT EXAMPLE (PAGE 2)

*Seeing the man-ape on the cliff, the duo realize they are at an immediate disadvantage; not only do they have to scale the cliff, they have to avoid being knocked off its face by the brute throwing rocks. They decide on a course of action that involves Brown Ratter throwing knives at the man-ape while Bronan climbs the cliff. Hopefully, the knives will provide enough distraction for the barbarian to make it to the top.*

*The Ratter pits his reflexes of 5 against the man-ape's reflexes of 4 (for dodging the knives). Since he has a one point reflexes advantage, Richard rolls two dice (base die + reflexes of 5 - man-ape's reflexes of 4). The results are 3 and 1. Taking the 3, that's a marginal failure (no, but). This might actually work. Richard accepts the 3, indicating the knife failed to hurt the man-ape BUT the GM agrees it proved enough of a distraction for Bronan to climb the cliff without the beast trying to stop him.*

*Bronan will use his mighty throws (5) to climb the cliff, minus 1 die for his armor. The GM assigns a resistance of 2, meaning Bob rolls three dice (base die + 5 for throws - 1 for armor - 2 resistance = 3). He gets a 2, 4, and 5. The 5 allows Bronan to accomplish his goal; he climbs the cliff!*

*The Ratter throws another knife in the hope that it will once again distract the man-ape, allowing Bronan to attack. Once again, Richard rolls two dice: a 2 and a 1! A failure! The man-ape turns to face Bronan in a clash of might!*

*Bronan's throws are up against the man-ape's throws. That's 5 against 6; not ideal for our barbarian. He's got no themes that can help him, but Bob can re-roll up to four dice for Bronan's slaughter impulse.*

*The two foes go at it. Bronan is at a 1-point disadvantage, so Bob will roll two dice and accept the lower result. He gets a 3 and 6. He must accept the 3, indicating Bronan is struck by the man-ape. He decides to accept the blow, conserving his impulse points for later in the battle. The man-ape's attack deals 6 damage (minus 1 for Bronan's armor), dropping Bronan to 10 hit points. But there is good news: the 3 means "no, but," giving Bronan*  
(continued next page)

## COMBAT EXAMPLE (PAGE 3)

*a welcome bright side. The man-ape's stat block lists 'distracted by rage' as a suggested "+" qualifier. Bob asks the GM if this qualifier would allow The Brown Ratter to sneak inside the cave and attempt to rescue the nobleman's daughter without interference from the man-ape. The GM says this is a would be perfect use of the rules, but the Ratter still hasn't scaled the cliff. She allows the thief to make the climb without attracting the monster's notice. With the Ratter's reflexes of 5 and the previously mentioned resistance of 2, Rob rolls four dice. He gets results of 4, 5, 5, and 6. Accepting the 6 gives the Ratter a critical success (yes, and)! The Ratter climbs the cliff. Richard suggests the "and" part of his roll allows the Ratter to sneak in the cave behind the man-ape's back. The GM agrees.*

*Returning to the combat between Bronan and the man-ape, Bob once again rolls two dice, knowing he must accept the lower roll. He gets a 2 and 5, meaning his attack fails and the man-ape lands another blow. Bronan can't afford another injury, so Bob elects to use one of Bronan's 4 slaughter points to re-roll the 2. He gets lucky and rolls a 6! This means his lowest roll is a 5 – his sword strikes true! The damage dealt is 5 points for the roll plus 2 points for using a heavy weapon. That's 7 points of damage, dropping the man-ape to 18 hit points. Even better, the 7 points of damage exceeds the man-ape's DICE level of 6! Since the initial dice pool favored the beast, the GM gets to select the hit location. She opts for the man-ape's left arm, which has now been severed by Bronan's mighty sword. The man-ape's reflexes and thews are both lowered by 1. Bronan now has 3 slaughter points remaining.*

*Shifting back to the Ratter, the thief encounters the nobleman's daughter chained to a wall by her left wrist. He pulls out his thieves' tools in an attempt to pick the lock. The GM asks for a guile (4) roll against a resistance of 1 (it's a really poor lock). He rolls 4 dice and gets a 1, 2, 2, and 4. That's a marginal success (yes, but). He manages to pick the lock and free the captive, but she yells in pain as the Ratter's tools accidentally jab her. The man-ape is now aware of them!*

*What will happen next? Will Bronan kill the man-ape while the Ratter rescues the nobleman's daughter? Play it out and discover for yourself!*

# GAME MASTERING RED MISTS

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## ASSIGNING RESISTANCE NUMBERS

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During every game, players will try to accomplish things that require dice rolls. The GM needs to assign a resistance number for each of these attempts. Each GM has their own expectations of how often characters should succeed. 50/50 is a good starting place, but you may feel a higher number is more exciting. Remember, if the resistance equals the player's dice pool, apart from the base die, that's a 50% chance of success.

Rather than go into a long essay about resistance numbers, below is a table that gives you the odds of different ability/resistance combinations. Take a look at the numbers and decide what you feel represents a 'standard' dice pool and, thus, what you feel a standard resistance would be. For example, if you assume a standard dice pool of 4 and you think a 75% success rate is a good fit, then a resistance of 3 would represent your standard resistance. 2 would be 'easy', 4 might be called 'challenging,' while 5 would be 'hard.' Decide what you feel is good baseline and take it from there!

		DICE POOL							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
RESISTANCE	1	.5	.75	.875	.9375	.968	.984	.992	.996
	2	.25	.5	.75	.875	.9375	.968	.984	.992
	3	.125	.25	.5	.75	.875	.9375	.968	.984
	4	.0625	.125	.25	.5	.75	.875	.9375	.968
	5	.03125	.0625	.125	.25	.5	.75	.875	.9375
	6	.01562	.03125	.0625	.125	.25	.5	.75	.875

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## ADJUDICATING DICE ROLLS

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The basics of Red Mists can be boiled down to two results: if the

player rolls a 4, 5, or 6, he gets what she wants. If he rolls a 1, 2, or 3, his attempt fails. Within these numbers lies a more interesting dynamic, one that qualifies results in a way that allows for greater narrative interpretation.

Die results of 1, 3, 4, and 6 each have a qualifier. In the case of a 3 (no, but), for example, the qualifier is “but.” The “but” means the attempt has been graced with a fortunate bonus effect. On the flipside, a result of 4 (yes, but) indicates the attempted task succeeds but is accompanied by an unwanted effect or intrusion. Beneficial qualifiers are called benefits, while negative qualifiers are called drawbacks.

One thing to always keep in mind: qualifiers are never more mechanically or dramatically potent than the success/failure that accompanies them. They are adjuncts to the main action, not the focus.

In interpreting a qualifier, you need to first consider the action’s logical progression. Is it possible that a successful attack with a sword could also result in the sword being flung dozens of feet away only to stab an ally on a 4 (yes, but)? I suppose it’s possible, but it’s hugely unlikely and, more importantly, it seems as potent a result as the original attack. Remember, qualifiers never overshadow the original success or failure. What, then, would be interesting and believable? Ask the player to describe the action and draw your conclusion. If the player describes her character taking a big step and swinging the weapon with both hands, then pulling a muscle might fit the narrative. Leaving herself in a disadvantageous position for the next round’s exchange makes sense as well.

In general, a drawback qualifier means something happens that the PC didn’t anticipate. She slips in the mud while escaping a wolf pack. She drops her dagger after stabbing at a foe. Her lock picking tool breaks. She makes a social gaffe. She accidentally burns her hand as she throws a vial of acid. A good default for drawbacks is to assess a -1d penalty on the character’s next action if it is related to the attempt that yielded the drawback in the first place.

*Xethuna strikes a bargain with a merchant for a pack horse (rolling a 4 on a guile check). The merchant sells her the animal but isn't entirely happy with the deal. Xethuna's next test, where she wants to get a good deal from the merchant on some traveling supplies, will be made with a 1d penalty to her dice pool. Looks like she may have to pay more than she wants for those supplies.*

Beneficial qualifiers follow similar logic. The sword attack that gains a benefit could mean the foe drops a weapon or slips. It may also indicate the adventurer has gained a tactical advantage. When all else fails, a +1d bonus to the character's next action usually works.

The monsters and NPCs described in the next chapter have suggestions for qualifiers. Each creature has one or more suggested drawbacks and benefits. When an adventurer facing the monster receives a result containing a qualifier, take a look at the monster's qualifier suggestions to give you ideas of what that qualifier might signify. The benefit is favorable to the adventurer, while the drawback is detrimental. You do not have to use these suggestions; they are provided for ease of play and as a guide to the game's fiction.

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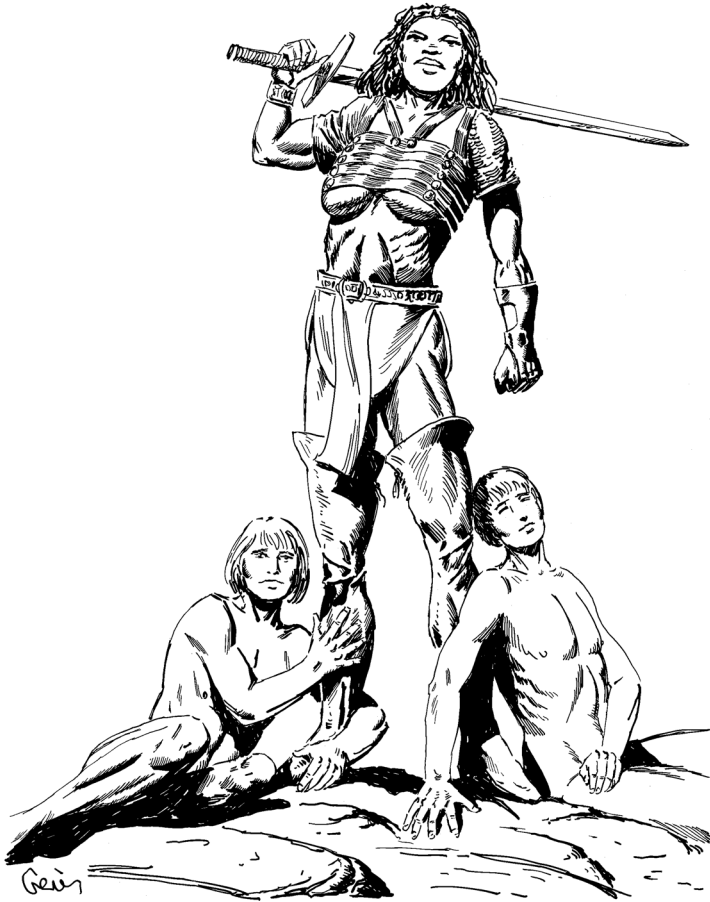
## TRADITIONS OF SWORDS & SORCERY

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While I'm sure most – if not all – of you have read at least a smattering of R.E. Howard, Fritz Leiber, or Michael Moorcock, a little refresher course might help you with your adventure designs. What follows is a brief account of the themes I've taken into account when designing *Red Mists*. You may not agree with some of these, so please take what you want and dispense with what you don't.

### **Clothing (or lack thereof)**

There is a lot of flesh on display in swords & sorcery tales. Characters often wear a bare minimum, with outright nudity not uncommon either. Much of this has to do with pulp stories being decidedly male-oriented fantasies of one degree or another. Female characters are frequently either damsels in distress or evil temptresses. Both stereotypes leave little to the imagination where revealing skin is concerned. Damsels



manage to lose or tear their flimsy clothes while temptresses divest themselves of clothing willingly. In our more enlightened age these elements can seem, at best, silly and, at worst, offensive. I suggest two solutions to dealing with the unsubtle nature of bare breasts and buttocks.

One, ignore it. Have both male and female characters dress in a realistic fashion. Let's face it, walking around a desert or swamp with just a loincloth and a necklace is pretty stupid. You'll get a really bad sunburn or lots of bug bites.

Two, impose equal opportunity nudity. Have both males and females dress in revealing ways. For every woman walking about with nothing



more than a silk scarf and a cloth wrapped around her hips and groin, make sure there's a man whose only adornment are his sandals and a scrap of deer hide covering his manhood.

You can also turn tradition on its head by introducing same-sex attraction. While this is nothing unique to us now, it frees the genre from some of its old fashioned shackles and still keeps in step with concepts of highly-verile protagonists.

### **Morality**

Characters in swords & sorcery tales generally aren't selfless do-gooders. Conan loots and pillages for a living. Elric is a servant of chaos. Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser are professional thieves. This can be quite an adjustment for players used to sending their characters on epic quests to foil an ancient evil or rescue kingdoms. This isn't to say the adventurers in Red Mists are evil, immoral, or even amoral. What they are is *selfish*. They live for money, sex, drink, or violence... sometimes all four. The idea of crusading for a higher purpose is an alien concept and worthy of derision; only fools risk their lives for no selfish purpose.

Any 'goodness' tends to be situational. Conan is a sucker for a helpless maiden or an honorable man. Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser wouldn't beat up beggars and steal their money. Elric does not wantonly kill and tries, albeit mostly in vain, to do the 'right thing' when presented with a moral dilemma. Characters in Red Mists will act accordingly. But they won't seek out wrongs to put right.

Not only is there no true goodness in the world, there is no karma. Selfless deeds won't bring any reward, spiritual or otherwise. Acts of deceit have no karmic repercussions. The world is cruel, random, and utterly unfair.

### **Begin In The Middle**

The classic swords & sorcery stories are short in length and full of incident. There is no place for long prologues; adventure begins right away. Many short stories of the genre begin in the middle of a furious chase or with the heroes imprisoned in a lord's keep for trying to steal

his hoard. Consider starting your games in a similar style. Present the players with a developing scene and ask them what they do or, better yet, *why* they're in this situation:

*“The three of you are in a small sinking boat along with a young woman screaming in its midst. She is pointing to a large ship is bearing down on you. Who is she? Why is your boat sinking? What’s up with that big ship coming toward you?”*

Use what the players give you during their ‘off time.’ Ask each player what his character does after the last adventure. Ask how he lost his winnings, how he got into trouble, and where he traveled. Take these developments and craft them into the opening scene of the next adventure.

### **Accomplishments Are Fleeting**

Significant change is not a feature of swords & sorcery, unless it comes with the death of the main character (hello, Elric). Even when Conan becomes king of Aquilonia, he’s usurped fairly quickly. Don’t let world-shaking deeds have any lasting effect for good. That vile priest who attempted to resurrect Ungol the Serpent God before the adventurers killed him? Sure, the city might have been saved from his machinations, but his absence leads the way for a two-faced ‘savior’ to take his place... and this new guy is *much* worse than the other guy.

Likewise, characters shouldn’t become too attached to possessions, including weapons. They might end an adventure with a famous sword and a heap of jewelry only to find themselves penniless and armed only with a knife at the start of their next exploit.

Make sure that players understand the short-lived nature of their accomplishments and wealth. Let them know that an item that helps them in the current episode may do them no good in the next one. The magical token they used to defeat the cavemen of the Nether Kingdoms will become a source of trouble for them later, as other factions will track them down and try to steal it from them. If a player becomes genuinely attached to something, such as the Gray Mouser’s knife Cat’s Claw, don’t forcibly take it from them. As long as it isn’t



a game-breaking item, allow it to remain as a signature possession. But don't hand out such baubles willy-nilly; they cease to become special when the character has bagfuls of them. One or two special items per character over the course of their lives is plenty. Remember, part of what makes the swords & sorcery genre unique is the concept of characters making do with what they can scrounge up.

### **Defeat Is Part Of The Adventure**

Classic heroic fantasy literature assumes the victory of the main character(s) over the antagonist. Swords & sorcery doesn't necessarily do that. These are hard-luck characters. Elric's life is a series of defeats and pyrrhic victories. Conan is constantly finding himself the lone survivor of his adventures.

Before you begin your game, make sure players do not expect to succeed all the time. Help them understand they may not get away with pillaging the temple or killing the legendary beast

of the Sullen Isles. Let them know that fleeing is an option when confronted with superior forces. Swords & sorcery characters are, above all else, survivors. Part of being a survivor is knowing when to retreat and live to fight another day. It also involves knowing how to spin things your way.

*Player one: "Oh man, I can't believe that vampire escaped. Now we won't get paid for killing it!"*

*Player two: "Who says we won't get paid? As far as I'm concerned we did kill it. The sultan doesn't need to know. After all, we did manage to cut off its hand. That's proof enough."*

### **Life Is Short -- Enjoy It**

If characters in these tales could express a philosophy, it might be 'live every moment as if it's your last.' They live day to day, moment to moment. They usually have no plans beyond the next day or two. Reflective of this, characters would rather spend their money on a night of debauchery than storing their winnings in a secret place for future use. Using money wisely is boring!

The threat of death is not much of a deterrent when there is treasure to plunder, ale to drink, and courtesans to lie with. The opportunity to die a 'good death' is reason enough to confront ferocious beasts and attempt impossible stunts.

Caution is a watch-word that doesn't fit the spirit of the genre; make sure your players understand this. If you notice one or more of the adventurers shying away from conflict and risk-taking, that is a signal to throw trouble at them. Remind them that characters in this game can take a hell of a beating before dying. Even then, their ultimate fate is largely in the players hands.

### **Trust No One**

Alliances change, promises are broken, and everyone lies. Like the characters themselves, NPCs in Red Mists are opportunists. Betrayal is part of the game. Every so often, you should remind your players of this facet by twisting their expectations.

- *The characters are secretly hired by a town official to kill a beast residing on a small island. When they return from their mission, the official declares the PCs heretics for killing the town's sacred totem animal!*

- *A beautiful princess promises to reward the adventurers with positions of power and bags of loot for stopping an invading hoard. While they're gone, she falls in love with her bodyguard and runs away with him, taking her treasure with her...*

- *The crew of a pirate ship captained by one of the adventurers mutinies when they're offered a better deal by a new deckhand who actually works for a rival pirate.*



## SORCERY

*“Arioch! Arioch! Lord of the Seven Darks! Arioch! Blood and Souls for my Lord Arioch!” Michael Moorcock, Black Petals*



The adventurers of Red Mists don't practice the dark arts. Such pursuits are the province of the corrupt, the demonic, the weak-willed, and the insane. Adventurers kill sorcerers, burn their shrines, and steal their stuff.

Sorcery is complicated. Rituals involving sacrifices, bloodletting, chanting, scribing, dancing, or all of the above are standard operating procedure.

Powerful sorcery is not fast or immediate. There are no wizards hurling bolts of energy or balls of fire. Speaking a few words or making a series of gestures will not evoke significant properties. The long process of summoning arcanic effects is the chief reason that, the more accomplished the sorcerer, the more crazed he is.

Every sorcerous purpose has its own unique requirements. When designing a ritual, GMs should consider any of the following components:

**Sacrifice:** the magic will only work with the blood of a very specific person or type of person. Consider people of a unique bloodline, or those born under unique celestial circumstances.

**Materia:** the ritual must be performed with items of symbolic or historic importance. The bones of an ancient king, the stolen scepter of a mad priest, or the dagger of a previous sacrifice are all examples.

**Time or Event:** the sorcery must be performed at an exact time or during a rare event. The classic example is an eclipse, but there are other things you may want to consider: the birth of a special child, the anniversary of an infamous act, or the crowning of a new king.

**Symbols:** demonic symbols scrawled on the floor. Glyphs carved into flesh. Parchment written with a pen dipped in the blood of a virgin. Whatever the medium, most rituals involve some form of arcane symbols.

**Forbidden Texts:** the methods needed to perform a ritual are often contained within the dusty, cracked pages of ancient books. The words and gestures required are too complex to memorize, so the text is often placed in front of the sorcerer as he performs.

**Chanting:** the demon lords must be supplicated or commanded with twisted words and songs. The sorcerer might need to chant these words himself or have a chorus of his servants do it while he performs other necessary acts to invoke the desired magic.

**Dance:** ritual movement in the form of dance is a common element of rituals involving the summoning of a spirit, demon, or god. A large group of dancing worshippers may be needed to aid the ritual. When the dance reaches a fever pitch, the ritual may be brought to fruition with a sacrifice or other punctuation.

The effects intended by sorcerous rituals are varied. There are three levels of sorcerous effects: minor, perilous, and catastrophic.

**Minor** effects are minor and usually brief. Their casting is innocuous unless the sorcerer is under direct observation. Minor magic accomplishes things a normal person could manage given the proper resources.

**Perilous** effects are blatant and often dangerous. Perilous magic generally affects one person, but may affect up to a room full. Effects are usually not achievable by mundane means or, if they are, would necessitate many people, tools, or weeks of time.

**Catastrophic** effects are potentially world shaking. This magic can affect entire geographic regions, cultures, and bloodlines. Its effects could only be achieved by natural means over a great span of time, if at all. *The goal of adventurers is to stop their implementation from ever occurring in the first place, or to defeat the powers unleashed.*

### **Invoking Sorcerous Effects**

To create sorcery, the magician must engage in any number of arcane rites and traditions to appease the Chaos gods that grant its effects. Here are some examples the GM can consider for the NPC casting magic:

#### **Invoking Minor casting**

- Drip own blood on the ground
- Pluck eyebrow hair
- Concentrate for an extra minute
- Suffer minor, self-inflicted pain

#### **Invoking Perilous casting**

- Sacrifice an animal, such as a goat or sheep (younger is better)
- Tear out a tooth or fingernail
- Burn a lot of incense
- Chant for several minutes to an hour
- Dance for several minutes to an hour
- Walk across burning coals
- Wait for a full moon
- Hold the ritual at a meaningful location



Scribe a handful of symbols on the ground  
 Eat the heart of a small animal  
 Sacrifice your health in the form of a point from thews

### **Augmenting Catastrophic casting**

Sacrifice a human virgin  
 Perform a self mutilation (sever many fingers, an ear, etc.)  
 Wait for a lunar eclipse  
 Hold the ritual at a meaningful location  
 Dance for hours  
 Chant for hours  
 Include several other people, all dancing and chanting  
 Form a pact with a demon  
 Light a massive pyre, burning several captives alive  
 Burn arcane symbols on own body  
 Scribe dozens or hundreds of symbols on the ground  
 Eat the heart of a freshly killed human  
 Sacrifice own health in the form of multiple points from thews

### **Duration**

If you need to know how long a sorcerous effect lasts, base it on the sorcerer's defiance score. Minor effects tend to last seconds or minutes. Perilous effect tend to last hours, days, or months. Catastrophic effects might last several months or even years. Thus, a minor curse that gives the target bad breath could last X minutes, where X equal's the sorcerer's defiance rank.

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## **BRANDS OF SORCERY**

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There are five kinds of sorcery, each with its own unique place in the swords & sorcery canon. The brands are curses, domination, mutations, necromancy, and summoning.

What follows are descriptions of each type of sorcery along with suggested - but not definitive - effects. The GM should feel free to ignore or change these effects to suit her vision of her adventuring world.

**CURSES** are ills cast upon the unwilling. Curses can be inflicted on persons, lands, whole families, and even institutions.

### Minor

- target becomes clumsy
- target becomes tongue-tied
- target flatulates... a lot
- target's skin becomes itchy all over
- target has a coughing fit
- target loses sense of taste
- target gets the hiccups
- target's chair breaks
- birds defecate on the target
- target's shoelace breaks

### Perilous

- any natural illnesses the target contracts last much longer than they normally would
- the target's love for someone turns to hatred
- the target contracts leprosy
- the target falls hopelessly in love with someone he can never have
- target cannot perform sexually

### Catastrophic

- an entire tribe will never bear children
- the countryside becomes blighted for decades
- death comes to anyone who touches an ancient tome
- the black plague ravages a nation
- any children borne of the target's loins will be a demon
- a landslide destroys a town lying at a mountain's base

**DOMINATION** is the literal taking of another's will. The sorcerer uses his own consciousness to wrestle control of the target's mind, forcing it to do things it doesn't want to.

#### Minor

- the target says something socially inappropriate
- the target drops a small item
- the target thinks he has forgotten something
- the target desperately needs to urinate
- the target caresses another's cheek

#### Perilous

- the target attacks another with lethal intent
- the target crumples to the floor and curls into a ball
- the target forgets who he is and what he's doing
- the target feels suicidal
- the target attempts to ride a dinosaur
- the target frees his slaves

#### Catastrophic

- the target kills his children while they sleep
- the target declares war on an unsuspecting neighboring country
- the target orders all members of a group to be rounded up and put to the torch
- the target surrenders his country to the rule of another

**MUTATIONS** are offenses committed at the expense of natural order. Anything that warps growth and form, combines different species, or otherwise transgresses nature is a mutation.

### Minor

change target's skin color green

cause warts to grow on target

target's nose changes shape

### Perilous

target grows gills on his neck and his feet & hands become webbed

target grows horns on his head and his feet turn into hooves

target grows coarse fur on his body

target grows a prehensile tail

### Catastrophic

transform a young child into a beast capable of apocalyptic destruction

target mutates into a half-man, half-demon

target melds into an existing tree, becoming physically part of it but retaining his acuity

target is warped into a corpulent mass of flesh, muscle, hair, and nondescript appendages. As it slithers about, it leaves a trail of mucus and tears. (10)

**NECROMANCY** involves dealing with the dead. The sorcerer disgraces the natural evolution of life and death to accomplish his goals.

### Minor

wither a small garden

cause someone's skin to wrinkle as if aged

### Perilous

animate the corpse of a small/medium animal or human

speak with a corpse

induce a rotting disease on one target

drain 1d6 hit points per 10 seconds from anyone you touch. You gain the hit points they lose, up to your maximum.

### Catastrophic

raise an army of the dead

take the mummified brain of an ancient magician and place it in the skull of a living being

cause everyone in a large space to age one year per minute

**SUMMONING** is perhaps the most dangerous of all sorcerous pursuits. The sorcerer attempts to force or coerce an otherworld being to do his bidding. There are no minor effects for summoning.

#### Perilous

Summon and treat with a lesser demon

Conjure a lesser demon's power

#### Catastrophic

Summon and treat with a demon lord

Conjure a demon lord's power

The term 'demon' is actually a catch-all for any otherworld being. As such, demons encompass elementals, aliens, gods, spirits, and actual demons. The more powerful the entity, the more difficult and dangerous the summoning.

There are two basic goals of summoning a demon. The first, called *conjuring*, implores the demon to loose some of its power to aid the sorcerer. The demon does not enter the material realm, but instead allows some of its magic to be manipulated by the sorcerer. The second goal, called *treating*, causes the demon to physically appear and bargain with – or be controlled by – the sorcerer. Conjuring is less difficult and less dangerous than treating, but also less powerful. A sorcerer may conjure a fire elemental's power to cause a campfire to burst into an inferno, but a fire elemental that actually appears could cause a hurricane of flame to burn a forest to the ground.

Lesser demons tend to have limited powers or abilities that can aid the sorcerer. A lesser wind elemental could whip up a violent wind rather than a hurricane or tornado. A lesser demon of slaughter could take out a small group of people rather than a stadium full of them. A lesser spirit could terrify a group of NPCs but not drive them to madness.

Demon lords are masters of entire otherworld realms. They have powers beyond the ken of mortals.

To treat with a lesser demon, the sorcerer may elect to parlay with it or bind it. Parlaying means the sorcerer bargains with the demon for a favor. Binding it involves forcing the demon to do the sorcerer's bidding. Binding is a contest of will. Results depend on the demon's personality and power. A disastrous attempt at binding a demon of slaughter is almost certainly going to result in the demon attacking the sorcerer with unhinged aggression or, even worse, mutilating the sorcerer's loved ones (if she has any). A more subtle demon might wait years before unleashing its wrath on the sorcerer, or aid her enemies in a campaign of retribution.

Like all NPC sorcery, there is no roll to determine the success or failure of the sorcerer's attempts to summon a demon. Results depend on how successful the adventurers are in thwarting the sorcery. Arriving too late to do anything will obviously end in a completely successful summoning. Managing to disrupt the sorcerer to a degree of minor inconvenience – perhaps causing the wizard to drop a component, delaying the act or causing it to be accomplished with less finesse than desired. The effect of the summoning is the GM's decision. Use this table as a rough guide.

Trouble caused by adventurers	Effect
None	Demon appears as desired and is bound as desired
Small amount	Demon's appearance is delayed or it demands a steeper price
Significant amount	Demon refuses to appear
Complete disruption	Demon is angry at the sorcerer and attacks him

Successfully binding a demon means the creature must do whatever the sorcerer commands, within its own capabilities and limitations. When the act is finished, the demon may be released back into its realm or the sorcerer may attempt to bind it again.

To summon or treat with a demon lord, the sorcerer must know the name of the demon she is attempting to contact. No amount of preparations

or complex rites will work without this knowledge. An entire adventure can be based around the character and his companions attempting to prevent a sorcerer from discovering a demon's name.

No demon lord will agree to a bargain without believing it has come out on top. A clever sorcerer might be able to use her guile to flatter the demon into thinking it has got the better of her. Many sorcerers agree to obviously unfair deals in the hope that they will be able to trick the demon at some point. The danger of such strategy is, needless to say, often not worth the risk.

Binding a demon lord works the same as binding a lesser demon, but the effects are more pronounced; destruction wrought is more severe, anger at being summoned is worse, and bargains are more demanding.

### Sample Rituals

The ideas below are a good starting point for considering what sorcerous plans are a good fit for your campaign.







### **The Resurrection of the Crocodile King**

Purpose: to bring forth the spirit of the dreaded crocodile king and place it in the body of an infant child. Once the ritual is completed, the child will be raised to affect the very specific purposes of the invoking

sorcerer...

Ritual: on the exact day and time of the original Crocodile King's death, an infant child must be fed the blood of a crocodile. The dagger that spills the reptile's blood must be made from one of the old king's ribs. A group of 41 adherents – the same number as the king's age at the time of his death – must chant and dance in an undulating ring around the child.

Time Required: one hour.

### **The Ascension of Vistra Zondhar**

Purpose: to transfer the soul of the aging former lover of Emperor Craggenmoor, Vistra Zondhar, into his new bride.

Ritual: the new queen must be called away on a winter errand that will purport to last until spring. In reality, she will be captured and held upon an altar, Vistra Zondhar lying beside her. The sorcerer will then feed them both an elixir that puts the imbiber into an unconscious state. While both women lie in stasis, the sorcerer must plunge his hands into their chest walls, bringing forth a beating heart from each. The heart of the new queen shall be crushed in the sorcerer's hand as he places Vistra's heart into the younger body. Vistra's old body is to be burned as her new body is buried in the cold ground. As winter ends and spring arrives, Vistra will arise from the earth, a new woman returned from her trip to her none-the-wiser king.

Time Required: 1 hour (ritual), 1 season (winter to spring).

### **Dearth of the Land**

Purpose: to curse Shepherd's River, the source of water for most of the Gulf Valley. Cursing the river will cause crops to fail and bring a pestilence.

Ritual: Before any ritual is performed, the sorcerer must infect himself with a wasting disease such as leprosy. As autumn plowing and fertilizing are underway, the sorcerer must fling into the river a weighted sack carrying a pregnant plague rat, a heap of rotting vegetables, and the loaded bowels of a murderer. As the components sink to the bottom of the water, the sorcerer shall supplicate the gods of pestilence by shedding his own infected blood into the river. As the weeks pass, the river will poison the land. As the land wastes away, so too does the

sorcerer's infection.

Time Required: 5-10 minutes for the ritual, 3-4 months for the desired effect.

Of course, not all sorcery involves complex rituals and components. Lesser effects may be achieved by quicker methods, such as:

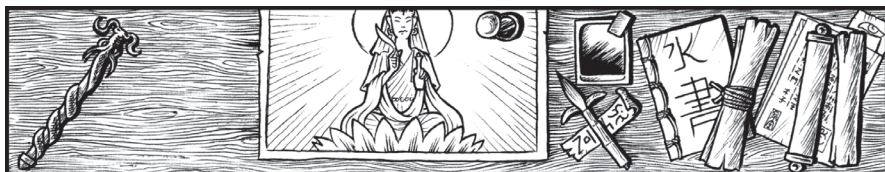
**Sand Gust:** the sorcerer blows a handful of sand mixed with the ashes of a desert nomad. The sand and ash mixture swirls about, gathering up dust from the ground and creating a blinding tempest that size of a man. The effect lasts a few seconds.

**Automoton:** by locking eyes with an adventurer, the sorcerer can gain temporary control of his actions. The GM makes a guile check for the sorcerer vs. the player's defiance check for his character. If the sorcerer wins, he can have the adventurer do anything he wishes, save suicide. The effect lasts for one round on a 4, two rounds on a 5, and three rounds on a 6.

**Living Earth:** the sorcerer pounds the earth with a fossilized bone of some creature. The effect creates an earth elemental in the form of the creature that provided the fossilized bone. The elemental is roughly half as powerful as the original creature and does not have any non-mundane special abilities (so a dragon elemental could not breathe fire). The bone is destroyed once used.

**Form of the Serpent:** the sorcerer can change into a large constrictor snake.

**A Fog is Rising:** the sorcerer creates a thick fog, the better to hide the approach of his army. It takes one hour to summon 100 square yards of fog. This assumes normal conditions in a temperate climate. Varying humidity levels can affect casting time and thickness of the fog. When constructing a sorcerous event, the GM should consider these questions:



*If the black magic hasn't yet been invoked, how can the adventurers stop it?*

- Kill the sorcerer
- Prevent the sorcerer from obtaining the tools he needs to invoke the magic
- Rescue the intended sacrifice
- Disrupt the ritual (set a fire, swarm the area, steal a vital material component)
- Prevent the ritual from starting on time (delay the actors so they miss the eclipse, force them to take another route to their intended location)

*If the ritual has been enacted, how can the adventurers fight its consequences?*

- Defeat the summoned creature (kill it, banish it back from whence it came, trick it to attack its summoner)
- Find the means to reverse the sorcery (track down a rival sorcerer, research a tome that reveals the secret to the ritual's undoing, find a magic item that will end the spell)
- Force the sorcerer to undo his work (threats, bargaining, force)

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## MAGIC ITEMS

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Magic items in sword & sorcery stories are rare. They are usually ancient artifacts designed for a single purpose. There are no generic magic swords or mass-produced magic rings. Such items in *Red Mists* follow this format:

**Purpose:** what was the item made for?

**Use:** what can it affect and, more importantly, what can't it affect?

**Life:** can the item be used indefinitely, or does it have a limited lifespan?

**Drawbacks:** does the item adversely affect its wielder? Does its use have side effects?

With these standard in mind, let's take a look at some magic items that work well for *Red Mists*.

### **Bane of Shiik the Immortal**

**Purpose:** a dagger forged to kill the immortal god-king, Shiik

Blacktongue.

**Use:** the dagger is the only weapon that can damage the god-king. Against him, it acts like any normal dagger used against a normal human. Against anything else, it ignores the protective value of armor.

**Life:** the dagger loses its power once the god-king is dead.

**Drawbacks:** Shiik can detect the presence of the dagger when held within a mile of him.

### **Juno's Half-finished Amulet**

**Purpose:** the amulet was meant as a prism for the priestess Juno of Paikan to gaze through to keep an eye on her secret lover. Alas, she died before its completion.

**Use:** the amulet allows the gazer to see what his subject is doing... to a degree. The amulet's owner must bear a lock of the subject's hair for the effect to work. Being unfinished, the images it shows are often difficult to discern.

**Life:** as long as it stays 'whole,' the amulet's power remains intact.

**Drawbacks:** the amulet's images can be unreliable and even deceitful.

### **The Twine Sash of Gasper, the Mad Fool of Khent**

**Purpose:** Gasper, a traveling minstrel, stole a forbidden book of black sorcery. While he could not make head or tail of its words, he used its long, many folded binding as a sash in mockery. It strangled him so forcefully that it is said his head popped from his neck.

**Use:** the sash binding's lethal effects are known only to a few. It has been used as a 'gift' to enemies as a sort of peace offering. Any peace is short-lived when the wearer find himself shorter by several inches.

**Life:** the sash is dry and cracked. It may break before the next time it serves its discovered purpose.

**Drawbacks:** the longer the sash is carried, the more murderous the carrier becomes.

### **Dog's Crook**

**Purpose:** the seemingly unremarkable shepherd's crook was created to rent the earth asunder to prevent the passage of the army of Cantar the Usurper through the open plain of Gram. It was never used, as Cantar's army was turned back by a barbarian attack from the west.

**Use:** the crook may strike the ground and crack it wide open, up to a

mile long and several dozen feet deep.

**Life:** unknown.

**Drawbacks:** unknown.



## BESTIARY

Each creature in the bestiary are described by a standard set of statistics and descriptors.

**Attributes** the guile, instinct, reflexes, and thews possessed by the creature for purposes of resistance numbers.

**DICE** the number of hit points of damage a creature needs to suffer before suffering the effects of being DICE'd (see page 21).

**Hit Points** the amount of damage a creature can withstand before being killed.

**Damage** the amount of damage the creature deals. Damage is listed as three values: the first (and lowest) is the damage dealt to the adventurer when his combat result is a 3. The next two values are dealt when the character respectively rolls a 2 or 1.

**Weapons** the natural or fabricated weapons the creature uses to attack

**Armor** the type of natural or fabricated armor the creature uses to defend itself. Armor is purely descriptive. Its in-game effects are subsumed into the creature's hit points.

**Themes** guides to creating evocative fictional depictions of the creature

**Sample Qualifier Results** ideas for the GM to consider when the player's combat attack indicates a qualified result. The listed themes are a guide to the fiction and may be used creatively by the GM to describe the monster's attitude, how it acts in different situations, and so forth. Sometimes example details of unique abilities are given, such as recovering from the giant spider's poison.



## DEMON OF SLAUGHTER

*Looking like emaciated corpses, demons of slaughter wield chains laden with spikes. They are summoned by sorcerous means, usually to dispatch enemies in gruesome ways. A demon of slaughter can be sent back to the underworld by discovering its true name and ordering it to leave.*

Defiance	Guile	Instinct	Reflexes	Thews
6	2	2	4	5
DICE	Hit Points	Damage	Weapons	Armor
10	30	8/9/10	spiked chains	none

**Themes:** hide just below the surface, don't attack until they're right next to me, drag into the water

### Sample Qualifier Results

#### Drawback

cause excruciating pain  
attack again

#### Benefit

confused  
attack own ally



## EARTH ELEMENTAL

*Earth elementals are virtually mindless beings created or summoned by sorcerers to guard their abodes. They feel no pain and never surrender or flee. Earth elementals are able to quickly regrow severed body parts.*

Defiance	Guile	Instinct	Reflexes	Thews
3	1	1	1	7
DICE	Hit Points	Damage	Weapons	Armor
9*	30	7/8/9	fists	rock & earth

\* can fight without its head

**Themes:** shake the earth, burst forth under your feet

### Sample Qualifier Results

Drawback	Benefit
regrows limb/head	turned to mud by water
knocked down	move out of reach





## EARTH SHAKER

*Earth shakers are some of the heaviest and fiercest beasts in the land. They are often used as mounts in battle by tribes of amazonian women. With poor vision, they charge ahead recklessly and sometimes crash into unintended obstacles.*

Defiance	Guile	Instinct	Reflexes	Thews
4	1	2	2	10
DICE	Hit Points	Damage	Weapons	Armor
13	40	8/9/10	trample	hide

**Themes:** charge blindly, angered easily, stupid

### Sample Qualifier Results

#### Drawback

knocked back  
trapped underfoot

#### Benefit

hide in blind spot  
crash into tree or boulder

## EVIL SORCERER

*Evil sorcerers are the bane of every adventurer and the source of much of the world's strife. They are self-serving, obsessed maniacs whose goal in life is usually to extend their own existence by using forbidden arts. Power over others for its own sake is always a staple of their evil playbook.*

*The arcane effects they summon are detailed in the sorcery chapter.*

Defiance	Guile	Instinct	Reflexes	Thews
6	7	4	2	1
DICE	Hit Points	Damage	Weapons	Armor
4	15	3/4/5	dagger	none

**Themes:** enslavement, torture, power, lies, evil pacts, corruption, maniacal laughter, unpleasant nudity, sacrifice human

### Sample Qualifier Results

Drawback	Benefit
escape to hidden passage	foil ritual
paralyzed by magic	escape bonds





## GIANT SNAKE

*Giant constrictors reside in swampy areas, frequently guarding ancient shrines or sunken treasure hoards. They use their huge fangs to bite victims wrapped in their crushing coils.*

Defiance	Guile	Instinct	Reflexes	Thews
3	2	4	4	5
DICE	Hit Points	Damage	Weapons	Armor
7*	30	5/6/7	coils, bite	scales

\* head hit location is 5 and 6, body is 1-4

**Themes:** hide just below the surface, don't attack until they're right next to me, drag into the water

### Sample Qualifier Results

Drawback	Benefit
wrapped in coils	release victim
knocked over	retreats into water

### Sample ability

On an attack result containing a drawback, the snake has constricted its prey, who suffers 3 Hit Points damage/round until the snake is DICE'd. The snake can only constrict one victim at a time.

## GIANT SPIDER

*Giant spiders hide in trees or dark caves, descending on prey from above in near total silence. They poison their prey with stingers and wrap them in powerful webs – alive – for later dining.*

Defiance	Guile	Instinct	Reflexes	Thews
3	2	4	5	3
DICE	Hit Points	Damage	Weapons	Armor
6	18	4/5/6	stinger	none

**Themes:** make clicking sound to alert other spiders, lower silently overhead on strand of web, wrap in webs

### Sample Qualifier Results

Drawback	Benefit
wrapped in webs	break free from webs
stung	knocked on back

### Sample ability

The victim of a sting makes a thews roll against a difficulty of 2. The victim makes this roll each round until the poison's effects go away.

**6** the poison's effects are gone, and the victim is now immune to any more bites from the species.

**5** the poison's effects are gone.

**4** the poison is no longer paralyzing the victim, but s/he is sick for one day, reducing all dice pools by one.

**3** the victim is still paralyzed, but receives the next roll to recover at +1.

**2** the victim is still paralyzed.

**1** the victim is still paralyzed and may not make another roll for one hour.



**GRUNT**

*Grunts are hired muscle of limited intelligence and violent dispositions. They are found everywhere in civilization.*

Defiance	Guile	Instinct	Reflexes	Thews
2	1	2	2	4
DICE	Hit Points	Damage	Weapons	Armor
5	15	4/5/6	fists, club	none

**Themes:** bully

## Sample Qualifier Results

Drawback	Benefit
wind knocked out	confused
driven to ground	trips over own feet

**GUARD**

*The typical town guard is a low-paid, poorly-equipped soul with minimal motivation to do his job well. Those that do enjoy their job are often bullies with delusions of power. Regardless, town guards are a fixture in cities and large settlements.*

Defiance	Guile	Instinct	Reflexes	Thews
2	2	3	2	3
DICE	Hit Points	Damage	Weapons	Armor
4	10	4/5/6	spear, dagger	light

**Themes:** lazy, heard it all before, not paid enough to chase you around, working my way up the ladder, won't say no to a bribe, bully

## Sample Qualifier Results

Drawback	Benefit
sound alarm	surrender or flee
help arrives	"I didn't see you do anything"

## MAN-APE

One of the most feared of jungle beasts, man-apes are aggressive and violent foes. They attack with their huge fists and vicious teeth, bloodying their unfortunate victims to a mass of pulp and viscera. Some man-apes will attempt to capture a weaker member of the party and keep it as a prized possession, a symbol of their virility and status.

Defiance	Guile	Instinct	Reflexes	Thews
5	2	5	4	6
DICE	Hit Points	Damage	Weapons	Armor
6	25	6/7/8	fists, bite	hairy hide

**Themes:** defend territory, kidnap the fairest person in the group, intimidate with a roar, beat chest, stinks

### Sample Qualifier Results

Drawback	Benefit
throw enemy	flee if outnumbered and injured
crushing hug	distracted by rage





## LION PEOPLE

The lion people of the scrub forests and plains are greatly feared for their taking of human slaves. Passing caravans are especially vulnerable to their savage attacks. Tribes are ruled over by a single male, while the females do most of the hunting. Other males are driven off or killed by the alpha. Slaves found to be difficult or incapable of work are eaten.

Defiance	Guile	Instinct	Reflexes	Thews
4	3	4	4	4

DICE	Hit Points	Damage	Weapons	Armor
4	15	4/5/6	teeth, sword	none

**Themes:** ambush caravan, take slaves, eat the old and infirm

### Sample Qualifier Results

#### Drawback

captured  
crippled hand

#### Benefit

retreat into the forest  
escape capture



## PYGMY

Pygmies are small, primitive humans no greater than 3-4' in height. They live in tribes on savannahs and in jungles. Pygmies are fierce little brutes, swarming their enemies like ants with their clubs, flint knives, and spears. They believe that eating other humans imparts the power of the victim's spirit into their bodies. Cooking victims alive in big pots is a favorite tradition.

Defiance	Guile	Instinct	Reflexes	Thews
4	3	3	4	2
DICE	Hit Points	Damage	Weapons	Armor
2	5	1/2/3	primitive	none

**Themes:** swarm, bite with sharpened teeth, cook you alive, steal your stuff, wear your bones

### Sample Qualifier Results

#### Drawback

gang tackle

attack again when you're asleep

#### Benefit

knock back 1d6 pygmies

chase away



## SUN DRAGON

*Sun dragons are creatures of the desert. They lie patiently in wait for passing prey, buried under sand or hiding in rocky outcroppings. Despite their name, sun dragons do not breathe fire.*

Defiance	Guile	Instinct	Reflexes	Thews
3	3	3	3	4
DICE	Hit Points	Damage	Weapons	Armor
4	15	4/5/6	teeth, claws	hide
<b>Themes:</b> lie in wait, eat alive, bask on rocks				
Sample Qualifier Results				
<b>Drawback</b>		<b>Benefit</b>		
calf torn to bone		flip over		
dragon dives under sand		chase away		



## WINGED HORROR

*Winged horrors live in mountainous areas. They build nests on high peaks or giant trees. They prey on anything smaller than a rhino to drop in their nests for their young to feed on. A favorite method of killing prey is to drop them from hundreds of feet onto rocks.*

Defiance	Guile	Instinct	Reflexes	Thews
3	2	2	3	6
DICE	Hit Points	Damage	Weapons	Armor
9	30	7/8/9	beak, claws	none
<b>Themes:</b> attack from above, fly high and drop you, feed you to my young, swallow whole				
Sample Qualifier Results				
<b>Drawback</b>		<b>Benefit</b>		
grasped in beak/talons		wing torn; cannot fly		
swallowed		escape from beak/talons/throat		



## APPENDIX

The following tables provide quick and easy sample test results. They may be used as examples, defaults, or suggestions as the GM sees fit. If you prefer to improvise on the spot or create your own tables, I encourage you to do so. Don't fall into the trap of using these as fixed rules; that would be far too limiting to a game of sword-swinging imagination!

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### CLIMB (THEWS)

---

Roll	Result
6	The climb is made in half the anticipated time. The adventurer may take a second action if warranted by the fiction.
5	The climb is accomplished as desired.
4	The climb is made, but the adventurer drops a piece of equipment.
3	The adventurer does not move in the direction she wishes (usually vertically), but finds an alternate route which she may attempt next round at +1d (one round only).
2	The adventurer decides the climb cannot be made without additional help.
1	The adventurer falls, suffering 4 Hit Points of damage for every 10' fallen. If the climb had not begun when the roll is made, assume the adventurer fell at the half way point.

---

## DEFEND (THEWS OR REFLEXES)\*

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Roll	Result
6	Successful defense of the attack, allowing for an immediate reprisal or action.
5	The attack is successfully defended.
4	The defender successfully avoids the attack, but her positioning is poor; the adventurer makes her next action at -1d.
3	The adventurer's defense is unsuccessful, she takes the attacker's lowest damage value.
2	The adventurer's defense is unsuccessful, she takes the attacker's middle damage value.
1	The adventurer's defense is unsuccessful, she takes the attacker's highest damage value.

\* Use Thews if defending a melee attack, reflexes if defending a missile attack.

---

## HIDE (GUILF)

---

Roll	Result
6	The adventurer is hidden so well that any actions she makes will go undetected for one round as long as she stays in her current location.
5	The adventurer remains unseen and unheard.
4	The adventurer arouses the opponent's suspicion but has not been seen. The latter walks towards her to investigate further.
3	The adventurer is discovered but may take an action before her opponents.
2	The adventurer is discovered!
1	The adventurer is discovered and caught off guard. She makes any actions to defend herself or flee at -1d.

---

## MELEE ATTACK (THEWS)

---

Roll	Result
6	Successful attack on opponent, who drops its weapon.
5	A successful attack dealing standard damage.
4	A successful attack dealing standard damage, but makes his next action at -1d.
3	The adventurer is struck for the enemy's damage, but he spots an opening. He makes the next round's action at +1d.
2	The adventurer is struck for the enemy's damage.
1	The adventurer is struck for the enemy's damage and his weapon or shield is knocked out of his hand.

---

## MISSILE ATTACK (REFLEXES)

---

Roll	Result
<b>6</b>	Successful attack on opponent, who now cannot walk or run.
<b>5</b>	A successful attack dealing standard damage.
<b>4</b>	A successful attack dealing standard damage, but the defenders are ready for the next one; the adventurer makes his next action at -1d.
<b>3</b>	The adventurer's shot misses the mark, but forces the defender to move awkwardly. He makes the next round's action at +1d.
<b>2</b>	The adventurer's attack misses.
<b>1</b>	The adventurer's attack misses and strikes an ally.



---

## PICK LOCK (GUILF)

---

Roll	Result
6	The adventurer is able to pick the lock quickly without attracting any attention.
5	The adventurer is able to pick the lock.
4	The adventurer is able to pick the lock but breaks his lock picking tools, or makes noise that attracts attention.
3	The adventurer is unable to pick the lock, but does not set off any traps or make noise.
2	The adventurer is unable to pick the lock.
1	The adventurer is unable to pick the lock and breaks his lock picking tools, makes noise that attracts attention, or sets off a trap.

---

## RESIST DOMINATION (DEFIANCE)

---

Roll	Result
6	The adventurer refuses the attempt at breaking her will. She may take an immediate action or make the attacker believe she is under its control.
5	The adventurer refuses the attempt at breaking her will.
4	The adventurer refuses the attempt at breaking her will, but is mentally drained. Make any defiance rolls for the rest of the day at -1d.
3	The adventurer breaks under pressure, but will not do anything to harm herself or her allies.
2	The adventurer breaks under pressure and does what is asked until the dominating force is defeated or driven off.
1	The adventurer breaks under pressure and does what is asked until she is defeated by the adventurers.

---

**SEARCH/LISTEN (INSTINCT)**

---

Roll	Result
6	The adventurer finds what he is looking for and gains insight. He may ask the GM one question about the significance of the discovery.
5	The adventurer finds what he is looking for.
4	The adventurer finds what he is looking for but arouses unwanted attention..
3	The adventurer doesn't find what he is looking for, but finds something else of interest.
2	The adventurer doesn't find what he is looking for.
1	The adventurer doesn't find what he is looking for and arouses unwanted attention.

---

**SNEAK (REFLEXES)**

---

Roll	Result
6	The adventurer is able to move with total silence and notices something unexpected. The GM will tell her what.
5	The adventurer is able to move with total silence.
4	The adventurer moves quietly, but must stop before reaching his intended destination due to a potential noisy feature of the terrain, such as a loose stone or dry leaves.
3	The adventurer arouses attention, but the enemy looks in the wrong direction.
2	The adventurer makes noise and is discovered.
1	The adventurer is discovered before he can react.

---

## STEAL (REFLEXES)

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Roll	Result
6	The adventurer is pilfers whatever she was after without attracting attention, and finds something else under or next to the item. If small enough to hide, she pilfers that as well.
5	The adventurer pilfers what she was after, and does not attract any attention.
4	The adventurer pilfers what she was after, but does so sloppily. Make another reflexes test to avoid being discovered.
3	The adventurer is unable to steal the item, but discovers something of interest she did not know about., such as feeling the shape of a small scroll in the NPC's purse.
2	The adventurer is unable to steal the item.
1	The adventurer is unable to steal the item. and is caught red handed.

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**TRACK (INSTINCT)**

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Roll	Result
6	The adventurer is able to follow her quarry and may ask the GM a question about the creature's abilities, purpose, or destination.
5	The adventurer is able to follow her quarry without being discovered.
4	The adventurer is able to follow her quarry but must make a sneak roll to remain undiscovered.
3	The adventurer loses the trail but discovers something else of interest, which the GM will describe.
2	The adventurer loses the trail.
1	The adventurer's quarry is waiting in ambush for her.

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# RED MISTS

Name

PROFESSIONS

ATTRIBUTES

Defiance

Guile

Instinct

Reflexes

Thews

ATTITUDES

ENVIRONMENTS

GEAR & WEALTH

REPUTATIONS

IMPULSES

You may use a point from a relevant impulse to re-roll a single unsatisfactory die. If the new result is worse than the original, you can use the original roll.

Debauchery

- improve any test result by one when using alcohol or sexual wiles to gain information or influence an NPC

Obsession

- re-roll an entire dice pool when your quest is threatened. You *must* keep the results of the second roll

Plunder

- reduce the difficulty level of any test by one level when stealing wealth

Self-Preservation

- add a die to a single skill pool when fleeing or fighting defensively.

Slaughter

- add one point to damage rolls on a 1:1 basis

HIT POINTS

LIFE LEVELS



RED MISTS IS A ROLEPLAYING GAME WHERE THE PLAYERS PORTRAY CHARACTERS IN SEARCH OF TREASURE, GLORY, AND ADVENTURE. THEY BOTH FEAR AND HATE SORCERY IN ALL MANIFESTATIONS; THE UNNATURAL BEASTS OF DARK PLACES, THE EVIL PRIESTS BENT ON TRANSFORMING THE WORLD, THE CRAZED MAGICIANS WHO BELIEVES THEY CAN SUMMON DEMONS AND BEND THEM TO THEIR WILL.

THERE IS SELDOM A GREATER GOOD BEING FOUGHT FOR, AS THE VERY CONCEPT OF GOODNESS IS ALIEN IN A WORLD SO SAVAGE AND UNFAIR. SURVIVAL IS THE DAILY GOAL OF EVERYONE.

ADVENTURERS JUST LIKE THAT DAILY GOAL TO BE FRAUGHT WITH POSSIBILITY.